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ABSTRACT

A longitudinal study of urban (Baltimore) black teenage mothers and their welfare experiences following the birth of their first child was started in the 1960s by Frank Furstenberg and has continued for more than 20 years. Information was gathered from 3 generations of the families of 300 women. Most of the school-aged mothers were not married at the time of birth and most came from very poor families. Although welfare touched the majority of these young women's lives, the average length of receipt was short, and chronic dependence on welfare was rare. There was substantial labor market activity among these young women, but this work did not always provide a permanent exit from welfare because most of these women worked in low- wage jobs without employee benefits. The author concludes that education offers some opportunity for teenage mothers to escape welfare dependency, but housing assistance, child care, and good health insurance would provide opportunity for more drastic long-term improvement. It is also concluded that those who study welfare mothers should pay attention to their working conditions, rather than the presence or absence of the work effort. Following an introduction, Chapter 2 describes the study methodology. Chapter 3 examines the welfare behavior of teen mothers, and Chapter 4 examines the process by which they enter the welfare system. Chapter 5 describes the ways women leave welfare, and Chapter 6 considers what happens when they do. Chapter 7 focuses on the relationship between work and welfare, and the final chapter synthesizes the research findings and their implications for welfare policy. Two appendixes discuss data reliability and analysis methods. (Contains 19 tables, 8 figures, and 236 references.) (SLD)

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